

Equality Impact Assessment (supporting guidance available)

Action Plan

This section is completed at the end of the Equality Impact Assessment. Due to the importance of embedding equality in SQA through our actions the Action Plan will be the focus and record of ongoing actions.

Agreed Schedule Review Date	By September 24	Additional Schedule Review Date	By September 23
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Explain how you will monitor and record the actual impact on equality groups, including how the evidence can be revisited to measure the actual impact.

Equality Impact Assessment – Home Based Workers V1.0

Required Actions	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
Review and assess monthly establishment management information packs containing fundamental employment data on SQA employees	People Analytics, Governance & Systems Manager	Commencing monthly from October 2022	
Review on a quarterly basis of employment law, case law and legislative changes, and equalities updates (including reviewing EHRC website).	HR Shared Services Manager	Commencing quarterly from January 2023	
Review and assess feedback on a quarterly basis from joint trade unions (Unite and Unison) through SQA's Joint engagement forum and Policy review group.	HR Shared Services Manager	Commencing quarterly from January 2023	
Review and assess feedback on a quarterly basis from each of SQA's staff community network groups	HR Shared Services Manager	Commencing quarterly from January 2023	
Continue to review and assess on an annual basis SQA's engagement People survey	OD Manager	Commencing annually from October 2023	
Review and assess on an annual basis all SQA employee lifecycle data	People Analytics, Governance & Systems Manager	Commencing annually from January 2024	

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Continue to review and assess every 2 years SQA's equality mainstreaming report [next report due May 2023]	People Reward and Equalities Manager	Commencing every 2 years from May 2023	
Continue to review and assess every 2 years SQA's workforce equality monitoring report [next report due May 2023]	People Reward and Equalities Manager	Commencing every 2 years from May 2023	

Equality Impact Assessment – Home Based Workers V1.0

Identified Actions	General Equality Duty	Owner	Date	Comment & Review
<p>Age, Disability, Race, Sex, Sexual orientation, gender reassignment Advise that policy wording be amended to include the need for team events and interactions on a regular basis to avoid social anxiety and loneliness</p>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination	HR Shared Services Manager	September 23	
<p>Age, Disability, Sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race Advise that support channel section is added to the policy</p>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination Foster good relations	HR Shared Services Manager	September 23	
<p>General Recommend a review of the need to have a Home Based Workers policy</p>	Not applicable	HR Shared Services Manager	September 23	
<p>General We advise that the Employee Assistance Programme benefit is directly referenced in the policy</p>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination	HR Shared Services Manager	September 23	
<p>General We advise that a direct link to lone working risk assessment is referenced in the policy.</p>	Eliminate unlawful discrimination	HR Shared Services Manager	September 23	

Policy Aims

Name of Policy or practice	Home Based Workers
New Policy or Revision	Revision
Name of Policy Owner	Head of Human Resources
Date Policy Owner Confirmed Completion	10/6/13

Summary of the conclusions from this Equality Impact Assessment:

We recommend that the use of this policy be immediately suspended in SQA for the following reasons:

- 1: The policy was developed pre Covid 19 pandemic and workplace attitudes / practices to homeworking have truly transformed post 2020.
We note that in its latest report on flexible/ hybrid working, the Office for National Statistics state:
"Of working adults currently homeworking, 85% wanted to use a hybrid" approach of both home and office working in future.
- 2: The policy is now largely superseded by the new SQA's Smarter Working Programme – a separate EqlA is required for this practice.
- 3: This policy, in its current format, does not reference or promote equality and we have recorded, as part of this assessment, potential adverse impacts in respect of Age, Race, Disability, Pregnancy/ Maternity and Sexual Orientation.

What is the rationale for this policy or practice?

It is important to note that this policy is still to be scheduled to be reviewed internally. There is a clear link with SQA's Smarter Working Programme. This programme was introduced in response to covid lockdown measures and allows for flexibility around workspace options, enhanced uses of technology in addition to provision of appropriate resources and policies to support this approach generally. Employees have discussed with their line manager whether they are matched to having one of four workstyle options

1. Fixed place and fixed hours
2. Fixed place and varied hours
3. Varied place and fixed hours
4. Varied place and varied hours

Smarter working programme principles have not been made policy for SQA at the time of writing this EQIA. We are conscious that this would essentially negate the need to have a separate home working policy.

The Home Based Workers policy applies to permanent home working only. It refers requests for regular or ad hoc home working to SQA's Flexible Working Policy.

The policy references that the main legislation relating to home-based working is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA) placing certain duties on employers and employees. Under HSWA, employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees, including home-based workers. With this policy SQA is recognising its responsibility as an employer to provide a safe and healthy working environment to home-based workers.

What evidence is there to support the implementation or development of this policy or practice?

SQA have to ensure they provide a safe working environment for home-based workers as detailed in legislation above. [Home working - HSE](#) details this further.

SQA have defined the criteria for home-based working mainly to meet business and job role requirements (Section 4 of policy).

SQA's people survey 2021 highlighted that 72% of it's employees agreed SQA were reducing impact on the environment, 79% agreed there was evidence that Health & Safety was taken seriously and 84% were happy with their working environment.

Other benefits for having this policy are outlined here [Work From Home Policy UK | Croner](#). It is important to note that covid lockdown measures taken by SQA and many other organisations have changed the original rationale for implementing this policy.

We recommend that a review of the need to have a separate Home-Based Workers policy is undertaken.

What are the aims of this policy or practice?

SQA employees may be designated to work from home to meet business needs or following agreement to an individual request to work from home. This document outlines the policy and procedure for managing and supporting home-based working.

This policy and its procedures have been developed to clarify the responsibilities of the various business areas involved in establishing and supporting home-based working arrangements.

This policy has been developed to:

- ensure effective management of home-based workers
- clarify the responsibilities of home-based workers
- clarify the responsibilities of the various SQA business areas which are involved in establishing and supporting home-based working arrangements
- clarify the criteria to be considered by managers in deciding whether it is appropriate to agree to a home working request

SQA recognises its legislative responsibility as an employer to provide a safe and healthy working environment and will do everything it can to meet this responsibility.

How is the content of these aims relevant to equality groups?

Home-worker definition is clearly referenced in the policy as applying to permanent arrangements only, though it does not specify if this applies to situations where employees may want to work part time at home and part time at an office location. We have assumed therefore it applies to both circumstances where all or part of an employee's working hours are formally worked at home.

We concluded that the 'Criteria for decisions on home working' (section 4 of the policy) are based solely on business related reasons (job type, location, budget availability, resources, individuals' performance) therefore there is no apparent consideration relating to any specific equality group.

There are 83 employees who are formally categorised as home workers having accessed the Home-Based Workers policy, prior to the Smarter working programme's introduction. 60% are female, 40% male which almost exactly mirrors the female to male (62 v 38%) split in SQA. No other equality information is available for this group, however.

Positive impacts generally for this type of flexible working arrangement are to suit individual needs, circumstances and work tasks. We considered potential negative impacts around the perception that you need to be seen in the office in order to progress (although there is no evidence to show that this is a big issue at SQA), this is a perception that anecdotally exists generally within workplaces. We looked at information like this Presenteeism: 80% of UK employees work when sick – Work in Mind.

We also considered whether working from home could potentially negatively affect anyone as the increased costs of heating/lighting, electricity demands, broadband, also desk/table or having sufficient working space, could cause increased demand on personal finances, particularly impacting on those on low incomes. There are provisions to apply for a tax refund through HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) if they are working from home, and SQA provides access to many discounted products and services as well as a financial and debt management advice service through Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Benefits. We advise that the EAP benefit is directly referenced in the policy.

There are evidenced issues potentially affecting any equality group caused by loneliness, insecurity and social anxiety from lone working Lone working - HSE and Impacts of Lone Working on Mental Health - Diverse Minds. While this is referred to in the policy, Section 11. Lone Workers there is no rationale, detail or up to date support included. We advise that this section is added to explain some background to explain why the links for support are shown here and to include and/or cross reference risk assessments mentioned in Section 6.4. The risk assessment must be reviewed to ensure it includes lone/remote working.

Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?

This policy will be developed in consultation with SQA's recognised Trades Unions, Unite and Unison, who represent all staff throughout the organisation.

In addition, as this is an internal policy, SQA will consult with internal groups. These include:

- ACE (Appreciate Culture and Ethnicity) Network.
- SQA Disability Network.
- SQA Rainbow Network.
- Women's Network.

Evidence of Stakeholder Engagement:

Trade Union Consultation Review Group (PRG):

Members of SQA Human Resources department and trade union representatives from *Unite the Union* and *Unison* meet weekly in SQA via the PRG. This group has been meeting weekly in SQA since July 2020. SQA's trade union representatives are also given statutory time off to attend relevant training, meetings and other information gathering activities as supported in our union framework agreement.

Evidence of all meeting minutes, actions and consultation undertaken with the PRG group (including Equality considerations in respect of all policies, activities and functions) is detailed on a dedicated SQA shared resources site.

What stakeholders have you engaged with in the development of this policy or practice?

Staff Network Consultations:

In June 2021, we formed a dedicated *Equality Impact Assessment Project Group* (EIAPG) with the aim of reviewing, assessing and providing feedback from staff on all SQA HR policies from Equality perspectives.

The EIAPG group consists of representatives from each of the SQA staff networks listed on the previous page of this document.

Evidence, feedback and actions from all EIAPG staff network consultations are recorded on a dedicated SQA *Microsoft Teams* page which was specifically created with the aim of listing potential equality risks that exist in H.R. policies / activities, sharing resources, recording feedback and scheduling future consultation meetings.

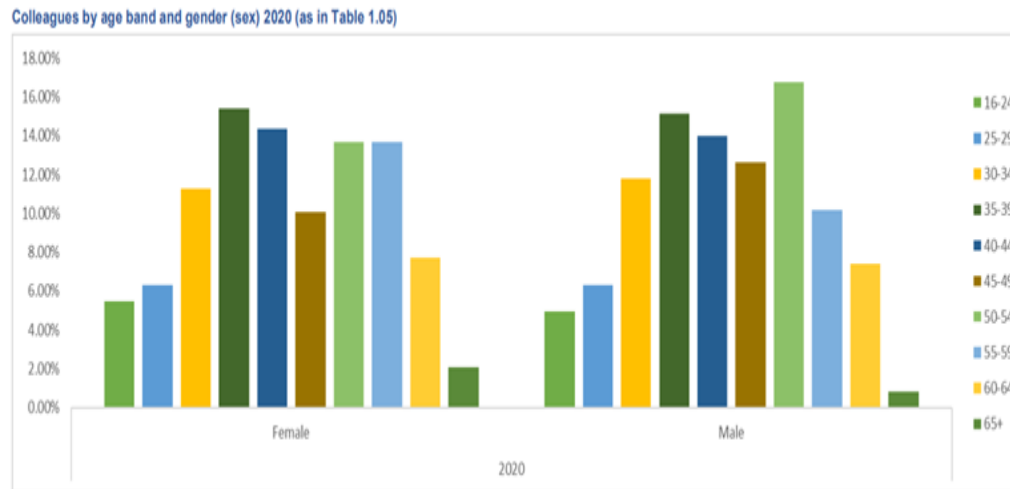
Evidence of Staff Network Consultation:

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Policy Name	Review Date	Women's Network	(ACE)	Disability Network	Rainbow Network
Redeployment	02/08/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restructure	02/08/2021	Yes		Yes	
Standby-& Call-Out	23/06/2021		Yes	Yes	Yes
Time Recording	09/08/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attendance Management	16/08/2021	Yes		Yes	Yes
Childcare Voucher	16/08/2021	Yes		Yes	Yes
Dignity at Work	10/08/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disciplinary	01/06/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion	23/08/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed Term Workers	23/08/2021	Yes		Yes	Yes
Grievance	29/06/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Improving Performance	07/09/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Probation	06/09/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recruitment & Selection	06/05/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Secondment	13/09/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whistleblowing	22/07/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flexible Working	18/11/2021	Yes		Yes	Yes
Flexitime	26/10/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pay	09/12/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TOIL	16/12/2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Code of Conduct	24/02/2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conflict of Interest	10/03/2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pensions Discretion	29/03/2022	Yes		Yes	Yes
Redundancy	22/03/2022	Yes		Yes	Yes
Relocation	31/03/2022	Yes		Yes	Yes
Retirement	15/03/2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

What evidence about equality groups do you have to support this assessment?

Age



Source: SQA workforce equality monitoring 2019-21

The majority of SQA employees are in the mid-range age bandings. A total of 79% workers are aged between 30 – 59. Less than 2% of SQA employees are aged 60+ and the SQA has recently seen a decrease in younger (under 35) employees. This data can be found in table 1.05 at [workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf \(sqa.org.uk\)](https://www.sqa.org.uk/workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf)

Nationally, Carer Positive the standard for employers in creating supportive working environment for carers state:

90% of working carers are over the age of 30, with the peak age for caring between the ages of 45 – 64. Almost half of carers (46%) were people aged 46-65. The percentage of carers who are aged 31 to 45 and 66+ increases with greater hours of care. By contrast, the share of carers aged 15 to 30 and aged 46 to 65 falls with weekly hours of care.

UNISON - the public service union states: It is common that many older workers having caring responsibilities for older relatives or

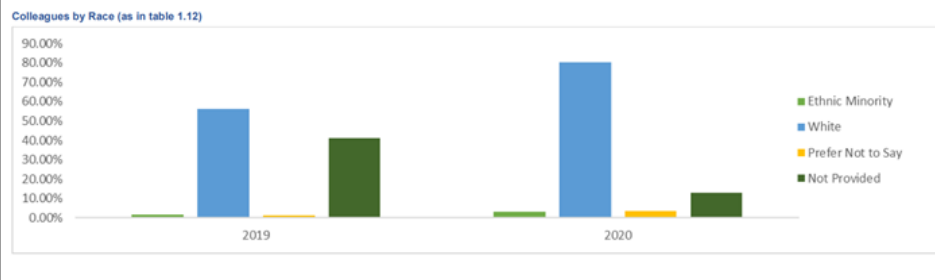
	<p>grandchildren.</p> <p><u>The decline of homeownership among young adults Institute for Fiscal Studies (ifs.org.uk)</u> <u>Why are more young people living with their parents? - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</u></p> <p>Both highlight the fact that younger people are more likely to live in shared accommodation and be more likely to live at home with parents.</p>															
<p>Disability</p>	<div data-bbox="488 480 1386 1023"> <p>Colleagues by disability status (as in Table 1.07)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Disability Status</th> <th>2019</th> <th>2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Disabled</td> <td>0.05</td> <td>0.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Disabled</td> <td>0.45</td> <td>0.68</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to say</td> <td>0.02</td> <td>0.07</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not Provided</td> <td>0.48</td> <td>0.16</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>A total of 8.2% of SQA employees declared a disability last year.</p> <p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021</p> <p>The highest proportion of colleagues who have declared a disability (53%) falls within the lowest age bands (16 – 44) and second highest (47%) within the upper age bands (45–64).</p> <p>A total of 55% of disabled employees are female and 45% are male.</p> <p>This information is available in table 1.07 at <u>workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</u></p>	Disability Status	2019	2020	Disabled	0.05	0.08	Non-Disabled	0.45	0.68	Prefer not to say	0.02	0.07	Not Provided	0.48	0.16
Disability Status	2019	2020														
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In the UK generally, [Mental Health Foundation | Good mental health for all](#) indicates 1 in 6 adults experience a common mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression.

[Inclusion Scotland - Inclusion Scotland](#) survey that highlights the impact of covid-19 on carers and people with disabilities in terms of the reduction in social care support and increased pressure on carers to cover gaps in care.

Race

Race	2019	2020	Variance
Ethnic Minority	1.82%	3.16%	1.34%
White	56.06%	80.40%	24.34%
Prefer Not to Say	1.07%	3.48%	2.41%
Not Provided	41.05%	12.96%	-28.09%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	



Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021

Currently 3% of SQA employees declared themselves as Minority Ethnicity against a national (Scotland) average of 5%. Data available in table 1.12 at [workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf \(sqa.org.uk\)](#)

[Health and mental health statistics - Institute of Race Relations \(irr.org.uk\)](#) states:

'[Government statistics](#) show that Black / African / Caribbean / Black British people in particular have higher rates of mental illness and are therefore more likely to encounter mental health services. The 2017 [Race Disparity Audit](#) found that Black women are the group most likely to have experienced a common mental disorder such as anxiety or depression and that black men are the group most likely to have

	<p>experienced a psychotic disorder. <u>Statistics</u> show that Black men are ten times more likely than white men to experience such a disorder.’</p> <p>We can find no data/evidence available to suggest that people from different races will be more or less likely to want to work from home.</p>																														
Religion or Belief	<table border="1" data-bbox="497 432 1435 703"> <thead> <tr> <th>Religion or Belief</th> <th>2019</th> <th>2020</th> <th>Variance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>20.69%</td> <td>29.82%</td> <td>9.13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Christian</td> <td>11.47%</td> <td>17.28%</td> <td>5.81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None</td> <td>20.69%</td> <td>29.29%</td> <td>8.61%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to say</td> <td>3.75%</td> <td>10.33%</td> <td>6.58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not Provided</td> <td>43.41%</td> <td>13.28%</td> <td>-30.13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.00%</td> <td>100.00%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021 29.82 colleagues say they are Christian, 17.28% are non-Christian, 29.29% declared no religion, 10.33% preferred not to say, 13.28% did not provide any information. This data is available at Colleagues by religion or belief (as in table 1.16) <u>workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf</u> (sqa.org.uk)</p>			Religion or Belief	2019	2020	Variance	Christian	20.69%	29.82%	9.13%	Non-Christian	11.47%	17.28%	5.81%	None	20.69%	29.29%	8.61%	Prefer not to say	3.75%	10.33%	6.58%	Not Provided	43.41%	13.28%	-30.13%	Total	100.00%	100.00%	
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Sex

Grade	Gender (Sex)					
	Female			Male		
	2019	2020	Variance	2019	2020	Variance
1	83.33%	66.67%	-16.67%	16.67%	33.33%	16.67%
3	65.15%	65.00%	-0.15%	34.85%	35.00%	0.15%
4	63.28%	64.71%	1.43%	36.72%	35.29%	-1.43%
5	58.02%	61.54%	3.51%	41.98%	38.46%	-3.51%
6	69.90%	69.90%		30.10%	30.10%	
7	59.76%	57.89%	-1.86%	40.24%	42.11%	1.86%
8	53.54%	56.34%	2.80%	46.46%	43.66%	-2.80%
HOS	39.39%	40.00%	0.61%	60.61%	60.00%	-0.61%
EMT	57.14%	42.86%		57.14%	42.86%	
Total	61.20%	61.64%	0.44%	38.80%	38.36%	-0.44%

Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021

A greater number of SQA employees overall are female - 62% female versus 38% male. A 60% representation of females across most grades is evident with a decrease to circa 40% for more senior grades. This data is available from Table 1.05: Colleagues by age band and gender (sex) [workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf \(sqa.org.uk\)](#)

Nationally, Carers UK state: [We're here to make life better for carers - Carers UK](#)

1 in 4 women aged 50-64 have caring responsibilities, compared to 1 in 6 men. Women have a 50:50 chance of providing care by the time they are 59; compared with men who have the same chance by the time they are 75 years old. Women are more likely to be sandwich carers (combining eldercare and childcare) are also more likely to give up work in order to care.

[www.equalityevidence.scot](#) reports 59% of all carers in Scotland are women.

[Research shows men are more lonely than women - Voluntary Action Sheffield \(vas.org.uk\)](#)

[Loneliness Annual Report January 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The above sources highlight that gender may not be a consistent factor in loneliness, we conclude that women may be more open about this feeling than men. Younger and older age (traditionally not working age groups) may be an easier to quantify factor.

Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation	2019	2020	Variance
	Bisexual	0.96%	1.26%	0.30%
	Gay man	1.39%	2.11%	0.71%
	Gay woman / Lesbian	0.96%	1.05%	0.09%
	Heterosexual/straight	46.20%	70.60%	24.41%
	In another way	0.11%	0.21%	0.10%
	Not sure	0.11%	0.11%	0.00%
	Prefer not to say	2.79%	8.01%	5.22%
	Not Provided	47.48%	16.65%	-30.83%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	
	Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021			
	70.60% colleagues say they are heterosexual, 1.26% bisexual, 2.11% gay man, 1.05% gay woman, 0.21% in another way, 0.11% not sure, 8.01% prefer not to say and 16.65% did not provide information. This data is available at Table 1.18 Colleagues by Sexual Orientation workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)			
	<u>LGBT in Britain - Health (stonewall.org.uk)</u> reported in 2018 that half of LGBT people (52 per cent) experienced depression in that year. One in eight LGBT people aged 18-24 (13 per cent) said they had attempted to take their own life in the last year.			
	<u>About LGBTIQ+ mental health - Mind</u> makes the link that, although anyone can experience a mental health problem, those who identify as LGBTIQ+ are more likely to develop problems like: <u>low self-esteem depression anxiety</u> , including <u>social anxiety eating problems misusing drugs and alcohol self-harm suicidal feelings other mental health problems</u> .			
Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)	No equality profiling data is currently captured by the SQA. <u>Gender transition Health Information Bupa UK</u> and <u>Gender and Mental Health Support and Advice YoungMinds</u> offer mental health guidance to people undergoing or thinking about gender reassignment, making a clear link to the risk of poorer mental health.			
Marriage/Civil Partnership	We have no evidence in relation to SQA employees or from wider research that there is a significant impact, positive or negative, for this group in terms of this policy.			

Pregnancy / Maternity	Colleagues			
	Pregnancy Status	2019	2020	Variance
	Not Pregnant	98.25%	98.95%	0.70%
	Pregnant	1.75%	1.05%	-0.70%
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	
	<p>Source: SQA Workforce Equality Monitoring Report 2019 – 2021</p> <p>98.95% of colleagues are not pregnant, 1.05% are pregnant available at Table 1.20: Colleagues by pregnancy status workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2019-2021.pdf (sqa.org.uk)</p>			
Care experience (where relevant)	SQA currently have no data that shows how many colleagues are Care Experienced.			

Impact and Opportunities for Action

The impact that a policy or practice has on an equality group may be different and this requires to be recorded. The impact may not always be negative. Actions are taken to address any differential impact, and include actions to mitigate against any negative impact, to advance equality and to foster good relations between groups.

Each section contains questions for each equality group. These questions are here to support consideration; however, you can provide further detail. Focus initially on the equality groups that would be affected by this policy. If you do not consider that certain equality groups would be affected by this policy, you may leave these sections.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Age	<p data-bbox="488 328 2029 387">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p data-bbox="488 453 824 480">Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p data-bbox="488 520 2029 703">Younger workers may be more likely to be living in shared accommodation or less likely to have suitable working space at home. This may result in a greater need to have the option to work a office location. While we recognise that many older people are highly capable when it comes to using new technologies, some older employees may not be as comfortable. There are higher numbers of older workers with caring responsibilities and home based working may help them achieve a better work/life balance with the need to travel to work removed.</p> <p data-bbox="488 743 2029 890"><u>We have recorded a potentially negative impact on younger and older employees but this can, we feel, be mitigated by rewording the policy and ensuring that team events, ideally through face to face interactions and support channels are explicitly offered to all home-workers to help to mitigate adverse affects on morale / motivation as a result of long term home working.</u></p> <p data-bbox="488 930 1603 957"><u>We advise that this policy is shared with the Young Person Network to discuss impact.</u></p> <p data-bbox="488 997 2029 1102">Conclusion: Adverse impact for Age is recorded where homeworking is mandatory in SQA for certain roles or is denied for workers wishing to work from home for age related reasons (e.g. poor health). Please see later section on <i>Disability</i>.</p>

Age	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>The home based workers policy applies to all SQA employees – irrespective of <i>Age</i>. This policy could help to advance equality of opportunity for employees who need to work from home on the grounds of their <i>Age</i>. (Please see later comments for <i>Disability</i>).</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>Whilst working from home may help reduce any gaps between older and younger people because interactions are ['invisible'], it may also lead to more prejudice due to the lack of workplace interactions and friendships which can break down misconceptions. If an individual in a team works from home permanently, there is often less opportunity for workplace interactions with different age groups, risks of isolation by tech generation (typically younger) as they stick to their own networks and have little opportunity to socialise across SQA's workforce.</p> <p><u>We conclude that the policy should directly reference this risk and refer to the need to engage an individual or individuals within a team by ensuring there are team events, ideally by face to face interactions at appropriate periods of time during the working year.</u></p>

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Disability	<p data-bbox="488 268 2029 331">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p data-bbox="488 363 824 395">Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p data-bbox="488 432 2018 619">Pages 2 & 3 of the policy lists the criteria used by SQA to assess if ‘permanent’, ‘regular’ or ‘ad hoc’ home working will be considered / allowed by SQA. The criteria listed in the policy is predominantly role, cost or operationally focused. The policy does not list, and therefore risks not being considered by SQA managers, employees who need to work from home or work more flexibility on the ground of their Disability. We consider this to be a serious omission in the document – both legally and in respect of promoting inclusion more generally.</p> <p data-bbox="488 667 2029 778">We conclude that home working may better support the needs of many disabled people. Conversely, with no workplace interactions disabled people are more likely to experience exacerbation of already poor mental health due to loneliness and reduced mental wellbeing and restrictions in the ability to undertake physical activity.</p> <p data-bbox="488 826 2018 970">There may be an impact on employees with certain neuro-diverse conditions who may require certain adjustments to working environments or practices. There may also be positive impacts in terms of providing the flexibility to work in an environment that is the best match in terms of meeting both work requirements, and those that relate to the specific needs of each individual disability, e.g. reduce the impact of distractions typical in an open plan office.</p> <p data-bbox="488 1018 1368 1050">Conclusion: Potential Negative impact for <i>Disabled</i> employees.</p> <p data-bbox="488 1098 2018 1166"><u>Rewording the policy and offering support specifically to mitigate the risk of isolation while promoting the potential benefits of working from home - ideally with SQA’s Disability network group could mitigate the above negative impact.</u></p>

Disability	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>If offered / allowed, home working may be considered as a positive reasonable adjustment to support an employee who has a <i>disability</i>. Home working and SQA’s other working arrangement policies (e.g. <i>Flexible Working</i> and <i>Flexitime</i>) should overall be considered as a supportive option for disabled people. However, there is an opportunity by using innovation and careful management practices to offer people with disabilities a sustainable and supportive way to work with SQA that accommodate their needs.</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>Whilst working from home may help reduce the gap between disabled and non-disabled people because interactions are [‘invisible’], it may also lead to more prejudice due to the lack of workplace interactions and friendships which can break down misconceptions.</p> <p>If working from home permanently there are less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups, risks of isolation by tech generation (typically younger) as people may stick to their own networks and have little opportunity to socialise across SQA’s workforce.</p> <p><u>We advise that this policy is shared with SQA’s <i>Disability</i> network group to discuss proactive ways to ensure individuals are not isolated in this way. The policy should also refer to the need to have team events and appropriate meaningful face to face interaction where possible.</u></p>

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Race	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>People from some ethnic groups are more likely to live in a house of multiple occupancy or overcrowded accommodation making home working much more difficult. This is particularly relevant where SQA state that a base at SQA premises is either unnecessary or where there is sufficient resources to offer permanent office accommodation for a role. (Pages 2 & 3 of the policy list both these factors as a reason for imposing what reads as ‘mandatory’ home working. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/housing-conditions/overcrowded-households/latest</p> <p>Permanently working from home may lead to greater isolation in communities, limited societal integration and a higher risk to this equality groups of poor mental health.</p> <p>We record a potentially negative impact on this equality group.</p> <p><u>We advise that this policy is shared with SQA’s ACE network group to discuss proactive ways to ensure individuals are not isolated in this way. The policy should also refer to the need to have team events and appropriate meaningful face to face interaction where possible.</u></p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic. The policy in its current format does not support this.
	Foster good relations
	As previously stated, working from home permanently may present are less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>Risks of Discrimination</p> <p>We conclude there is no reasonable evidence to suggest this policy could adversely affect employees on the grounds of this 'Protected Characteristic'.</p> <p>Neutral Impact Recorded.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>Hybrid working could benefit anyone with religious and/or other beliefs, providing more flexible arrangements for praying or other religious or belief practices and practices.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>The policy is unlikely to impact on the promotion of good relations between people of different religions / belief systems.</p>	

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sex	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>In one respect, women are more likely to be balancing part-time, caring and /or schooling and if working from home for sustained periods, can have a negative impact on wellbeing. Home working also potentially reduces the opportunities for networking and potentially career-progression. Home working and reduced interactions with others can increase the risk of domestic abuse for both genders with potentially more time spent indoors. Loneliness affects men and women and without workplace interactions, levels of loneliness can increase due to home working.</p> <p>Alternatively, flexibility around hours of work and location can be a positive to opening up opportunities for both existing and new employees.</p> <p>Conclusion both positive impact and negative impact is recorded for this equality group which could be mitigated by rewording the policy to add a criteria relating to consideration home working due to personal or domestic circumstances.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic. The policy in its current format does not support this.
	Foster good relations
	As previously stated, working from home permanently may present less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations for employees of both Sexes.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Sexual Orientation	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>We have reviewed evidenced that people in this equality group are more likely to have existing mental health issues and therefore continued home working can further impact mental health with longer periods of social isolation and no contact with colleagues. Long periods at home can mean greater abuse from unsupportive families or partners, contributing to increased stress or distress, and increased risk of abuse.</p> <p>There are potential negative impacts through domestic and social isolation but action specifically detailing the <u>need to have team events and appropriate meaningful face to face interaction where possible will mitigate this.</u> <u>Support channel detail in the policy will help individuals access help too.</u></p> <p>Conclusion – Potential Adverse Impact Recorded.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic. The policy in its current format does not support this.
	Foster good relations
	As previously stated, working from home permanently may present less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations for employees generally.

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<p>Gender Re-assignment (Gender identity and transgender)</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p>There are evidenced increased levels of mental health problems for this equality group.</p> <p>The workplace is one of the most likely locations for discrimination and harassment to occur, although it is important to note there is no evidence of that specific risk in SQA. Generally, working from home could limit this risk.</p> <p>A comfortable and supportive home environment can also provide more privacy and security. We recognise that longer periods at home can mean greater abuse from unsupportive families or partners, contributing to increased stress or distress, and increased risk of abuse.</p> <p>A positive impact is recorded for this equality group with noted potential negative impacts resulting in advised action to mitigate domestic and social isolation by specifically detailing the <u>need to have team events and appropriate meaningful face to face interaction where possible.</u></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic. The policy in its current format does not support this.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Foster good relations</p>
	<p>Digital home-working could enable a more inclusive environment for all where all colleagues are treated equally with no labels. As previously stated, working from home permanently may present less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations for employees generally.</p>

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
<p>Marriage/Civil Partnership</p>	<p>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p>
	<p>Risks of Discrimination</p> <p>We conclude there is no reasonable evidence to suggest this policy could adversely affect employees on the grounds of this 'Protected characteristic'.</p> <p>Neutral Impact Recorded.</p>
	<p>Advance equality of opportunity</p>
	<p>A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic.</p> <p>The policy in its current format does not support this.</p>
	<p>Foster good relations</p>
<p>As previously stated, working from home permanently may present less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations for employees generally.</p>	

Protected Characteristic	General Equality Duty
Pregnancy / Maternity	<p data-bbox="488 264 2029 328">Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010</p> <p data-bbox="488 392 824 424">Risks of Discrimination:</p> <p data-bbox="488 451 2002 523">There are potential negative impacts in terms of blurring of lines between work and home life and the difficulty in undertaking some roles in the home (e.g. sensitive conversations in the presence of children when working at home).</p> <p data-bbox="488 557 2029 628">Physical mobility during the final stages of pregnancy must (of course) be considered and discussed and potential risks assessed to ensure the home working environment is safe and secure.</p> <p data-bbox="488 662 1977 850"><u>We advise that the policy wording includes responsibility for line managers of staff who are or become pregnant to discuss their home-working arrangement ensuring a review arrangements of necessary. These steps could include defining which tasks can be completed at home and any that should only take place in an office location. Providing support channels in the policy is advisable also. Reference in the policy the need for an updated formal risk assessment to be undertaken.</u></p> <p data-bbox="488 884 1917 957">We record a potential negative impact for this equality group mitigated by additional policy wording and clear responsibility.</p>

Pregnancy / Maternity	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>Home working supports pregnant women to continue working fully even in the later stages where physical mobility may become an issue. It can also provide greater flexibility for any appointments that may be needed and the home may provide a more comfortable physical working environment.</p> <p>With more than 1 in 10 women developing a mental illness in the perinatal period, home working and a lack of social interaction with peers could exacerbate mental health. For women who return to work after a period of maternity leave, the physical office environment may look very different as a result of post covid safe and secure building protocols. This may increase levels of anxiety about returning to work and uncertainty of what to expect.</p> <p><u>The risk to good mental health can be partly mitigated by risk assessment, discussion with line manager and if required HR and/or Occupational Health provider to determine best support options available. Including wording to describe this and links to support channels in the policy will help clear understanding of action and support. This needs to be reflected in SQA's Maternity policy EQIA also.</u></p>
	Foster good relations
<p>A revised policy could be an ideal vehicle for promoting equality of opportunity for people who, on balance, would have a greater need to either work from home or be officed based on the grounds of a protected characteristic.</p> <p>The policy in its current format does not support this.</p>	
<p>Working from home permanently may present less opportunities for workplace interactions against different groups of people which would not assist in fostering good relations for employees generally.</p>	

	General Equality Duty
Care experience (where relevant)	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
	<p>We conclude there is no evidence to suggest that this policy may impact directly / indirectly on people who are Care Experienced and therefore make no further recommendations in this area.</p> <p>Neutral Equality related impact is therefore recorded in this area.</p>
	Advance equality of opportunity
	<p>We conclude there is no evidence to suggest that this policy may impact directly / indirectly on people who are Care Experienced and therefore make no further recommendations in this area</p>
	Foster good relations
	<p>We conclude there is no evidence to suggest that this policy may impact directly / indirectly on people who are Care Experienced and therefore make no further recommendations in this area</p>

Rationale

If you are proceeding with a decision that may have a negative impact and are not putting in place actions to mitigate against this, please explain how this is objectively justified.

All identified negative impacts have mitigating actions